DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 277 301 HE 019 918

AUTHOR Mannelly, Kathy Olson
TITLE Human Resource Development: Staff Development Begins with the Selection Process.
PUB DATE Oct 86
NOTE 8p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Guides - Non-Classroom Use (055)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Employment Interviews; *Group Activities; Higher Education; Information Needs; *Job Application; *Personnel Selection; *School Personnel; Work Environment
IDENTIFIERS *Pacific Lutheran University WA

ABSTRACT

A group interview process for filling job vacancies that is used by the Office for Student Life at Pacific Lutheran University is explained. The process has been effective for filling positions that require substantial interpersonal interaction. Objectives of the group interview process include: to ensure that all applicants receive the same information; to decrease the amount of staff time involved in filling positions; to increase the cost effectiveness of the interview process; and to enhance the development and increase the retention of employees. Specific activities that are involved in the application process, the information-giving session, and interviewing phase are outlined. In the application phase, the following activities are undertaken: developing a position description, circulating the position announcement, and seeking and screening applications. The information-giving phase, which is noncompetitive and lasts about 1 hour, provides accurate information about the position, working conditions, and the environment so that applicants can decide if they are interested in pursuing the position. A 15-minute break allows applicants who are no longer interested in the position to leave. The competitive interview phase determines the most qualified applicants. A diagram illustrates the group interview process. (SW)

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Human Resource Development: Staff Development Begins With the Selection Process Kathy Olson Mannelly, MPA, Pacific Lutheran University, Tacoma, WA 98447

In their book Personnel Administration in Higher Education, Fortunato and Waddell state "The purposes of the employment interview are to exchange information and to promote the goodwill of the institution for applicants who are not hired."

The model* presented offers a developmental strategy which emphasizes public relations during the employee selection process. For those hired it provides a method which improves the new employee's "readiness for job productivity". For those not hired the image of the college or university is enhanced which increases public goodwill. The process saves time and is a cost effective change from the traditional application and interviewing methods and can be used for any employment position which requires interpersonal contact with staff and students.

* Adapted from "Linking Employee Selection with Public Relations: A Strategy for Organizational Success", K.O. Mannelly. Copyright 1986

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PACIFIC LUTHERAN UNIVERSITY
Office of the Vice President for Student Life

GROUP INTERVIEW PROCESS FOR FILLING JOB VACANCIES*

The Office for Student Life uses a group interview process for filling job vacancies. We have found this process to be an effective method for filling positions that require a great deal of interpersonal interaction. We have successfully used it to fill hourly positions, contractual positions, assistant director positions, and director positions.

The group interview process has five (5) purposes:

1. to ensure that all applicants receive the same information about the position;

2. to decrease the amount of staff time involved in filling positions;

3. to increase the cost effectiveness of the interview process;

4. to enhance the development and increase the retention of employees;

5. to enhance the public relations aspects of the interview process.

There are four (4) phases to the group interview process:

a) the application phase;

b) the information giving phase;

c) the break;

d) the competitive phase.

I. The Application Phase

Purpose: to develop a position description, to circulate the position announcement, to seek applications for the position, and to screen applications for suitable candidates to interview.

* Copyright, "Linking Employee Selection with Public Relations: A Strategy for Organizational Success," K. O. Mannelly, 1986.

(continued)

1. The supervisor of the position reviews and revises the existing position description as necessary in light of current and projected needs.

2. The supervisor develops an announcement of the position's availability and qualifications and circulates the announcement to appropriate applicant resources.

3. The supervisor of the position or a selection committee reviews written applications/resumes for information which matches the basic job qualifications.

4. The supervisor or selection committee sets a meeting date, time, and place and invites those selected from the applications/resumes to interview for the position.

5. The supervisor or selection committee informs employer participants of the meeting date, time, and place. The employer participants should include:

   5.1. Persons to whom the position reports directly;

   5.2. Persons to whom the position reports secondarily;

   5.3. Whenever possible, the person leaving the position.

   It is not necessary for all of these people to review the written documents before the interview.

6. The employer participants select a meeting facilitator. This person should have superb group process skills. The role of the facilitator is:

   6.1. to perform hospitality functions before and during the interview so that everyone feels as comfortable as possible;

   6.2. to outline and explain the interview agenda;

   6.3. to ensure that each applicant receives a position description and a description of the group interview process;

   6.4. to introduce each participant and explain her/his role;

   6.5. to ensure that the interview runs smoothly and is properly completed.

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II. The Information Giving Phase (non-competitive)

Purpose: to provide accurate information about the position, the working conditions, and the environment so that applicants can decide if they are interested in pursuing the position. This session lasts approximately one hour and includes the following agenda:

1. The facilitator explains the meeting agenda and when appropriate, describes the general nature of the organization.

2. The applicants review the written position description.

3. The "hiring person" explains various aspects of the position and the working environment: salary range, fringe benefits, vacation time, sick leave policy, retirement, institutional culture, educational and developmental opportunities, working hours, and any other pertinent information.

4. The hiring person explains her/his working style, personality quirks, expectations of staff generally and of this position in particular, and any other information important for a potential co-worker or subordinate to know.

5. Each of the other employer participants explains her/his own position in relation to the open position; her/his expectations of the person who fills that position; ways in which team effort might be involved.

6. The applicants ask questions pertaining to the position, the environment, expectations for the person filling the position, and other issues of interest and concern.

III. Break (15 minutes)

At this time those applicants no longer interested in the position may leave. All applicants remaining for the interview phase should be interested in competing for the position.

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IV. The Interview Phase (competitive)

Purpose: to determine which, if any, of the applicants is most qualified for the position or which of the applicants qualifies for a second interview. Length of interview phase depends on the number of applicants present.

1. Each of the employer participants asks both general and specific questions, usually in turn, pertaining to each applicant's qualifications, working style, reasons to be hired, program ideas, hypothetical situations, and any other pertinent matters.

2. Each applicant responds to the questions. Applicants may add to their answer when all have finished answering a particular question.

3. Applicants ask questions of the employer participants.

4. The facilitator closes the session by explaining the process for notifying the applicants of the next steps to be taken in filling the position.

5. The applicants leave.

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6. The selection process begins.

   6.1. The selection committee takes a 10 minute break.

   6.2. Each person lists her/his first three choices.

   6.3. If all agree on the first choice, consensus is reached.

   6.4. The selection committee determines a second choice, in the event the first choice declines the position when it is offered.

   6.5. In a group of outstanding applicants the selection committee makes a third choice.

   6.6. When there is no immediate consensus, in depth discussion follows regarding the selection committee's particular preferences among the candidates. The final decision rests with the immediate supervisor of the open position.

7. Before adjourning, the selection committee makes one of the following decisions:

   7.1. selects one applicant to be offered the position;

   7.2. selects one or more of the applicants for another interview;

   7.3. determines that none of the applicants is suitable for the position;

   7.4. determines that the position will remain open.

8. Regardless of the decision made, those who are no longer being considered for the position receive written notification within 48 hours of the interview.

   All others receive written or telephone notification of the status of the process within 48 hours of the interview. The goal is to reach a decision as rapidly as possible, preferably within 48 hours of the interview.

9. It is not unusual for the candidate offered the position to request an additional opportunity to meet with the hiring person or with others with whom the candidate would be working, before the candidate makes a decision about the position. We honor such requests.

OSL:11/08/85
revised 10/86

Office for Student Life
Pacific Lutheran University
1986